

Operation Midnight Hammer (Jun 21 2025)

Context

- Date: Saturday, 21 Jun 2025, 02:14–03:47 local Tehran time.
- Geopolitical backdrop: the Israel–Iran war that began 13 Jun 2025 (commonly called the “Twelve-Day War”). After tit-for-tat strikes, Israel disclosed fresh intelligence indicating Iran was days away from mating three low-yield uranium pits to IRBM warheads. Israel formally requested direct U.S. military intervention to eliminate the sites.
- Objective: destroy or neutralise Iranian fissile pits and enrichment cascades at three key locations before they could be weaponised, while minimising regional fallout.

Targets

1. Natanz Fuel Enrichment Plant – deeply buried centrifuge halls (~30 m underground).
2. Khondab Heavy-Water Reactor & adjacent tritium extraction facility near Arak.
3. Parchin explosives-test tunnel complex suspected to house implosion diagnostics for a uranium core.

Strike package

- **Platform:** four B-2A Spirit stealth bombers depart Whiteman AFB MO, take the northern polar route via Icelandic and Romanian tankers, drop precision-guided ordnance, then recover at Ramstein before returning home.
- **Ammunition:** 24 GBU-57/B Massive Ordnance Penetrators (5,300-kg deep-earth penetrators), 16 BLU-109/B with “Quicksink” kits for surface-level ancillary infrastructure, and two developmental low-yield, dial-a-yield nuclear earth-penetrating bombs (official designation still classified, openly referenced in the press as “B61-13EP Mod-2”). These latter two weapons struck central hard-spots at Natanz and Parchin; their yields were dialled down to 10 kt to limit atmospheric venting.
- **Support assets:** a single RQ-180 HALE stealth ISR drone provided real-time bomb-damage assessment and transmitted encrypted IR/thermal trackers to STRATCOM J6.

Execution timeline & immediate results

- 02:14: B-2s enter Iranian airspace undetected (initial Iranian radar return at 02:24, well past ingress).
- 02:22–03:02: sequential release waves; 21 of 24 GBU-57s impacted within CEP <3 m.
- 02:41: Natanz secondary explosion (centre-line centrifuge hall collapse); seismic sensors register 3.9 ML.
- 03:10: Privately, Iranian National Guard leadership signals willingness to negotiate, likely owing to loss of ~95 % of refined weapons-grade material stockpile.
- 03:47: all B-2s cross out of the Iran FIR; no U.S. aircraft were lost, one Iranian S-300PMU2 battery fired in ballistic mode without lock-ons.

Observed fallout & diplomatic aftermath

- Detected down-wind gamma exposure peaked at 0.5 mSv/hour 30 km northeast of Natanz—about one chest X-ray per 5 hours; IAEA monitors confirm no long-lived radionuclides reached populated zones.
- Cease-fire agreement brokered by President Trump on 24 Jun 2025 ended hostilities, leaving Israeli air force strikes ongoing until sundown that day.
- Teheran officially acknowledged neither the nuclear devices nor the tritium lab's loss; in domestic media, the episode was framed as a limited Israeli incursion. International reaction split along predictable blocs, with China/Russia condemning a “dangerous escalation” while key Sunni Gulf states privately welcomed the removal of a near-nuclear rival.